

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000537

SIPDIS

USAID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA FOR KHANDAGLE AND MARX,
DCHA/FFP FOR LANDIS, PETERSEN AND WHELAN,
AFR/SA FOR FORT AND COPSON
STATE FOR AF/S DELISI AND RAYNOR
NAIROBI FOR DCHA/OFDA/ARO FOR RILEY
NSC FOR DWORKIN
PRETORIA FOR USAID/DCHA/FFP FOR DISKIN,
DCHA/OFDA FOR BRYAN AND FAS FOR HELM
ROME PLEASE PASS TO FODAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [E A I D](#) [P R E L](#) [U S](#) [Z I](#)

SUBJECT: Humanitarian Assistance Field Observations
in Zimbabwe; March 4-8, 2003

SUMMARY

1. From March 4-8, (2003) USAID/AFR/SA Officer (AIDOff) MacNairn conducted three field trips to assess the delivery and impact of humanitarian assistance in Zimbabwe. Events covered for these field trips included a seed fair, a food distribution (also attended by DCM Whitehead), and an interview with a commercial farm worker. The seed fair and food distribution proceeded smoothly, and the commercial farm worker provided first-hand support for the widespread allegations of corruption and political manipulation of government food distributions. END SUMMARY.

RUDAWIRO SEED FAIR

2. On March 4, AIDOff, accompanied by Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) staff, attended a seed fair in Rudawiro business center, Chigwarada Ward, UMP District in Mashonaland East Province. The seed fair voucher system is funded by USAID and the Department for International Development-UK (DFID), and provides beneficiaries in communal farming areas with Z\$6400 (about US\$4.50 equivalent) worth of vouchers to purchase seeds. In this particular case, vegetable seeds were available (e.g., rape, cabbage, cucumber, tomato, squash, carrot, bean, onion, spinach, etc.), as the planting season for cereals has already passed. This seed fair targeted 1200 beneficiaries within the zone, covering roughly 80-90% of the total population for the area. Beneficiary selection criteria for this scheme included widows, child-headed households and orphans, those chronically-ill, handicapped, or otherwise destitute.

3. Pannar and Prime were the two seed companies providing the seeds at this fair. Beneficiaries chose which seeds they wanted, based on price and their Z\$6400 budget, and the seed companies collected the vouchers. The seed companies then present these vouchers for payment to CRS' partner NGO, in this case Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT). CTDT selects and registers beneficiaries based on set criteria, organizes the seed fairs, prints the voucher coupons, and provides other logistical support. CRS' agriculture project manager provides technical assistance and other support for the activity. The seed fairs are a novel approach to food security in that distributed seeds help to avoid the dependence that direct food aid creates, the seed distributions empower beneficiaries by allowing them to choose what they want to grow, and the vegetables contribute to a better-balanced, more nutritious diet, particularly important for those suffering from debilitating chronic illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS.

4. Training is provided by CRS and its partner NGO, CTDT, to allow beneficiaries to save seeds from grown vegetables for the next planting cycle. For some vegetables it is much easier to save seeds, i.e., butternut squash and tomatoes, as opposed to cabbage and rape, where it is usually easier to provide seeds on a continual basis. Effective saving of seeds through multiple growing cycles contributes to the sustainability of the intervention. At this point, CRS has focused its efforts on emergency relief interventions with CTDT. CRS and CTDT expect that future training for seed fair beneficiaries will make

them better able to implement seed replication techniques, as all stakeholders prepare for the 2003/4 growing season.

15. It is expected that beneficiaries will consume roughly sixty percent of vegetables grown, and sell the remaining forty percent. CTD will perform follow-up visits to ascertain whether these above proportions are generally correct, whether beneficiaries have planted their purchased seeds, and productivity levels for individual gardens. The area targeted for this seed fair should be one of the more productive areas for Mashonaland East, as numerous perennial streams run through that part of the province, and water sources should remain readily available after the rainy season ends in April.

16. UMP District is served by World Vision with international food aid from the World Food Program (WFP), and the governmental Grain Marketing Board (GMB) for other/commercial food supplies. World Vision is expected to target two-thirds of the district population for food aid in March 2003. Rudawiro residents reported that GMB deliveries for the past 6 months have been erratic. Respondents also reported that maize meal was being sold at the official price of Z\$560/50 kgs., but that only very small quantities were available. Residents stated that the recent doubling of the gas price (officially Z\$150/liter) meant that round trip costs by bus from Rudawiro to Murehwa (Z\$2000) and Harare (Z\$4400) had become onerously expensive.

SANYATI FOOD DISTRIBUTION

17. On March 6, AIDOff accompanied Embassy DCM Whitehead, observed a CRS food distribution in Sanyati town in Kadoma District. 1219 families received rations for this general distribution. This represents 100% coverage for this initial CRS food distribution in this area (as opposed to 75% coverage in most other program areas). Beneficiaries patiently organized themselves in small groups of 50 or so people, based on their home areas, and waited for their turn to receive the monthly ration of 10kg. bulgur wheat and 1 kg. pinto beans. No oil was available for this distribution, and bulgur wheat was a new food commodity for beneficiaries. CRS distributed handouts in English and Shona explaining how to cook the bulgur wheat, and promised to follow up to determine whether beneficiaries were properly cooking the bulgur, and whether they liked the commodity.

18. Beneficiaries appeared to be happy upon receiving the bulgur wheat. Initial reports received indicated that beneficiaries liked the commodity and did not have difficulty cooking the bulgur wheat. However, follow up will be required to determine if this new food commodity is truly accepted by the beneficiaries.

19. Grain Marketing Board (GMB) maize meal deliveries at Sanyati, were also reported to be erratic, with widely varying amounts reported to be delivered over the past several months. One villager alleged that the GMB has reduced deliveries to Sanyati because CRS is now distributing food in the area.

110. The primary and secondary schools in Sanyati town do not provide meals for students. The headmaster for each respective school reported lowered attendance because of the recent food shortages - 45% decrease at the primary school and 30% at the secondary school. Both headmasters also expected attendance to increase in the coming week, once these initial food distributions had been completed.

111. GOZ officials turned out in force for this distribution, likely due to the DCM's presence and the fact that this was the first CRS distribution for this area. GOZ officials present for the distribution included the local Kadoma West Member of Parliament (ZANU-PF), the District Administrator, the Deputy District Administrator, representatives from the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare, at least 8 policemen, and the two headmasters. NOTE: This was in contrast to the Rudawiro seed fair where no local government officials were visible. End Note. The distribution appeared well-organized and efficiently run, with no overt political posturing evident during our visit. The MP invited the DCM to a virginity certification ceremony to take place in his district in

the following week. The DCM respectfully declined the invitation

¶12. The Sanyati area borders the Munyati River, and cotton is the predominant crop in this lowveld area. The maize harvest for this area is expected to be about 40% of normal.

FARM WORKER INTERVIEW

¶13. A credible commercial farm worker was interviewed on March 8 in Manicaland Province. The main points from this conversation include:
- GMB maize is widely being sold at inflated prices of Z\$2000/20 kgs., rather than the official Z\$560/50 kgs. Price.
- many people know that maize meal is being sold at inflated prices on the black market, but individuals are unwilling to complain, as they fear reprisals from local authorities involved in the illegal practice.
- newly-resettled farmers in the area were typically coming from outside the province, were not from communal areas, and typically had little farming experience.
- newly-resettled farmers were positively favored in receiving GMB maize at the official price.

¶14. The commercial farm worker relayed a further story where a neighboring commercial farm was prevented from planting maize at the beginning of the rainy season in 2002, because it was occupied by war veterans. The commercial farmer then recently attempted to buy GMB maize meal for his 75 workers as he had no maize to feed them from his farm. Officials selling the GMB maize said that he could only purchase one bag of maize meal at the official price for himself, rather than the 75 bags that he wanted, as his farm workers were perceived to be MDC supporters, and thus did not 'qualify' for GMB maize at the official price.

¶15. The commercial farm worker also commented that the national youth service centers were contributing to the spread of AIDS, because little education or controls were being provided for the trainees. Finally, he noted that inflation was destroying the purchasing power of the average commercial farm worker. The official minimum wage for commercial farm workers is Z\$7500/month plus benefits, which translates to US\$5/month at the current parallel market rate. Many commercial farm workers on resettled farms make less than the official \$7500 wage.

COMMENT

¶16. CRS' innovative seed fair strategy appears to be popular and highly successful, and should be encouraged. Follow-up evaluations should be conducted to determine sustainability, and the actual percentages of consumption and sales for the vegetables grown. Although the bulgur wheat distribution went well, it remains to be seen if this new food commodity is truly accepted by the beneficiaries. Follow-up will be required here, too. The farm worker commentary provides first-hand corroboration for the widespread allegations of corruption and political manipulation of government food supplies.
End Comment. SULLIVAN